

**Chippewa County
Economic Development Committee
Regular Meeting
May 6, 2026
Chippewa County Courthouse, Room 302
5:00 PM**

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 05:00 PM

2. Roll Call

Members Present:
James Ericksen, Charles Bomar, Duane Shoebridge, Daniel Hardy
Members Absent:
Lee Hennick
Others Present:
Traci Bremness, Andy Albarado, Charlie Walker, Charity Zich, Ellie Peabody, Rachel Jacobson, Doug Clary, and Todd Pauls. Recorder: Lisa Merrell.

3. Members of the Public Wishing to Be Heard

(Comments will be limited to 5 minutes per speaker.)

4. Consent Agenda

(Unless separation of an item is requested, all items will be adopted under one motion.)

Motion:	Approved
Result:	Passed (4 - 0)
Mover:	Charles Bomar
Seconder:	Duane Shoebridge
Ayes:	James Ericksen, Charles Bomar, Duane Shoebridge, Daniel Hardy
Nayes:	None
Absent:	Lee Hennick

1. Approve the Agenda
2. Approve the Minutes - February 5, 2026 Regular Meeting and March 31, 2026 Special Meeting

5. Business Items

1. Establish Regular Meeting Date and Time

The committee was agreeable to keeping the meeting date the 1st Wednesday of the month on a quarterly basis (February, May, August and November), but changed the meeting time to 5 PM. Also, the February 2027 meeting was changed to a week earlier, on 1/27/2027 at 5 PM.

6. Reports

1. Tourism Council Report - Ellie Peabody

Ellie Peabody from the Chamber of Commerce was present to provide a report on the Tourism Council. Peabody shared the 2026-2028 strategic plan, which gives them a framework for the next couple years. Rachel Jacobson from the Chamber noted that in the last three years, Chippewa County and the

State of Wisconsin have been having record-breaking years in terms of economic impact.

2. Airport Report - Charity Zich

Airport Director Charity Zich was present to give a presentation for the committee. There is a joint agreement between Chippewa County and Eau Claire County and they are in the third year of the most recent five-year agreement. It is a very successful collaboration between multiple municipalities that supports a facility that has a broader reach than one municipality or county would normally have. Chippewa County's contribution comes from sales tax dollars, so those dollars are used for capital projects at the Airport. Zich reviewed a few of the recent capital projects at the Airport, including a new hangar to house the Mayo helicopter and a new multi-phase lighting, signage and navigational aid project, where they will transition to LED, which will save on utility costs as well as staff time because the lights will have a longer life span. Zich pointed out that in 2025 they had the highest number of aircraft operations since 2010, with over 27,000 operations during hours of tower operation. Zich noted that this Saturday they are having a fly in and pancake breakfast at the Airport, and they will be welcoming back the Chippewa Valley Air Show in June of 2027.

3. Economic Development Committee Overview/Orientation - Andy Albarado

A. Review Economic Development Policy

Administrator Albarado noted that the current Economic Development Policy was adopted by the County Board in 2022 and outlines how they do things, and why. Walker explained the Revolving Loan Fund process. Chippewa County provided seed money for the Regional Business Fund, which is managed by Regional Planning. The Regional Business Fund has a loan committee that takes the applications and makes recommendations for approval of those loans. The same committee would serve if an application came in to the County for their revolving loan fund, they would just add the Finance Director of the County to the committee. The loan committee would make a recommendation to the Economic Development Committee, and if the loan application is approved, the County would administer that loan.

B. Review Contracts/MOU's

Albarado noted that there is a Memorandum of Understanding for the operation of the Airport. Eau Claire County owns the airport, which is located in Chippewa County, and it is operated under a commission form. The County appoints one Board member and two citizen members to the Commission and provides a yearly contribution which is used for debt service and capital projects because it is funded through sales tax.

The Tourism Council and Economic Development Corporation are a contract for services. The County has a list of deliverables that they each have to provide in exchange for the funding we provide. Albarado noted that the County applied for a grant through Wisconsin Economic Development (WEDC) for Make My Move. The project provides incentives to people for coming to live here, instead of giving incentives to businesses. The State of Wisconsin awarded \$5 million toward this project, in collaboration with Make My Vote. If Chippewa County is awarded a \$250,000 grant, it would be a 2 1/2 year program. The platform is already built out and ready, they just have to wait for the announcement of the grant awards from WEDC in June.

C. Role of Economic Development Corporation

4. Chippewa Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) Report - Charlie Walker

A. Update on Projects and Follow-up on County Board Orientation Presentation

Walker stated the Economic Development Corporation focuses on four areas: business expansion and

retention (BEAR), helping entrepreneurs, site selection and business attraction, and workforce and talent initiatives.

Walker provided an update on some current projects they are working on.

B. Upcoming Events

Walker noted the CEDC Annual Meeting is being held May 15th at the Eau Claire Event District, and their annual report will be presented there.

5. Lake Wissota Business Park History - Andy Albarado/Charlie Walker

Albarado noted that the packet contains a history of the Lake Wissota Business Park.

7. Updates, Announcements, and Correspondence

Albarado noted that there will be a special County Board meeting on May 19, 2026 at 6 PM to discuss the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative. They have requested assistance from the County by requesting they facilitate a \$10 million State Trust Fund loan.

8. Agenda Items for Future Consideration

9. Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 6:16 PM.